only a moderate number of beaver. In fact, he found it "most strange" that any beaver still remained. and he was pleased that his traps continued to produce a "good business" considering the extremely cold weather.[353]

It had been Ogden's intention to pass the winter at his former quarters near the junction of the Portneuf and Snake Rivers, but he learned from the Indians that there were no buffalo there and that Blackfoot raiders had been making life miserable for the natives. Also his horses, mere "skin and bone," were in no condition for such a long trip. Therefore he spent the next month and a half on the upper Portneuf River and along the lower Bear River, where grass and buffalo were sometimes available. A large consideration was the preparation of dried buffalo meat for the homeward journey.

The weather during most of the period was severe. One of the men became seriously ill on February 14. Ogden gave him an emetic, but when the patient still complained three days later, the leader said, "I have given him all the purges and vomits I had. and it is his duty to recover, for he can expect no longer any assistance from me."[354]

On March 24, near the junction of the Bear and Malad Rivers, Ogden considered his winter hunt ended. He then had 1300 beaver and otter pelts and was looking forward to spring trapping along the Humboldt. Setting a course for the latter stream, he retraced his eastward track for most of the distance. En route he detached a

party under Charles Plante to trap on Raft River and to return to Fort Nez Percés by the route of 1826. Ogden was left with only fourteen men.

On April 2 it was discovered that Indians had stolen two horses. "We are too lenient towards these wretches," he noted in his journal, "but the great difficulty is to discriminate between the guilty and the innocent." Ogden did not feel too much sense of loss, however, since one of the missing animals was "of little value" and "both belong[ed] to our horse guard who as he does not trap will not injure returns, but oblige him to perform the remainder of his journey from this to Fort Nez Percez on foot."[355]

The Humboldt a short distance above its junction with the North Fork was reached on April 10, 1829. The brigade followed down the main stream, trapping with indifferent success as it went. On the way a long detour was made northward up Maggie Creek and on to the headwaters of the South Fork of the Owyhee River. The upper waters of the latter were hunted intensively in accordance with Governor Simpson's policy of creating a "fur desert." Yet Ogden had a few twinges of conscience. "It is scarcely credible what a destruction of beaver [has occurred] by trapping this season," he noted; "within the past few days upwards of fifty females have been taken and on an average each with four young ready to litter. Did we not hold this Country by so slight a tenure it would be most to our interest to trap only in the fall, and by this mode it would take many years to ruin it."[356]

When the yield of furs began to drop off significantly Ogden turned about and headed back for his Unknown River. Following a southwest course, the men reached their goal some distance east of the present Winnemucca on May 9, 1829. Ogden and his party now started to trap downstream to the river's discharge into the lake of which he had been told the previous November. Hunting was good but much handicapped by a lack of traps. More than a hundred traps had been lost since the expedition started, about half of them stolen by Indians. On May 13 only eighty-two remained.[357] Ogden hoped that a "stack" of new traps would be waiting at Fort Vancouver, but he was not optimistic that such advance preparations for his next expedition would have been made. As a result, he worried, "we shall again . . . lose half our fall hunt . . . from the late season we start."[358]

Humboldt Sink was reached on May 29, 1829. The Indians in this vicinity were extremely annoying, stealing traps and horses and attempting to murder detached hunters at their vocation. A party of more that 200 natives approached the camp the next day, but observing that the trappers were in a posture of defense they made peace. Ogden later told McLoughlin that although he had experienced several narrow escapes during various expeditions, "he never ran greater Risks of being cut off with his whole party" than during this episode near the mouth of the Humboldt.[359] From these Indians Ogden heard of a river having abundant salmon and distant an eight days' march -- undoubtedly today's Truckee River.

Ogden believed that good beaver streams might lie to the south, and he told the natives they would see him again in three months.[360]

On May 31 Ogden decided that his party was too weak to continue the advance, so he turned back up the Humboldt bound for Fort Nez Percés. He departed from his outward route beyond the Little Humboldt and the Santa Rosa Range to take a more northwardly path before turning westward to rejoin his old trail south of Alvord Lake. Near the north end of Steens Mountain Ogden told his men of his intention to go to the Columbia by way of Silvies River instead of by the more direct Malheur River-Grande Ronde route. because he hoped to take another 200 beaver by so doing. Some of the men, already short of provisions, objected, but the leader's will prevailed.

Thus on June 18 the party crossed the north end of Steens Mountain and the next day arrived at the familiar Malheur Lake. Ascending Silvies River, Ogden crossed Sunflower Flat to the South Fork of the John Day River. Travel down this latter stream was extremely hard on the horses, and Ogden feared that many of them would have to be left behind. But on July 2 the party reached a camp of Snake Indians busily engaged in taking salmon. More than 200 half-dried fish were purchased, and the men once again had full stomachs and happy dispositions. "Canadians are certainly strange beings," Ogden reflected; "in the morning more curses were bestowed on me than a parson would bestow blessings in a month, and now they find themselves rich in food with a fair prospect of soon reaching

the end of their journey I am in the opinion of all a clever fellow for coming this way."[361]

From this camp the brigade soon turned up the North Fork of John Day River and followed it about as far as the present Dale. Here the party left the stream and turned north over the Blue Mountains. Since the route to Fort Nez Percés was now familiar to most of the men, Ogden and two companions went on ahead on July 8.[362] It is not known when the leader dragged himself into Walla Walla, but he and some of his men reached Fort Vancouver on July 24, 1829, and the rest of his people arrived on August 1.[363]

McLoughlin was highly pleased with the results of Ogden's fifth Snake expedition. "His Returns are better than last year and amount including with what his people traded here and in the Interior to four thousand Beaver, and in my opinion remarkably well dressed and in the highest state of preservation, which, when it is considered some of these Furs have been Carried on Horses backs through the Country since last fall Winter & Summer, certainly does him great credit." Although not bound to do so, the departmental manager paid the trappers an extra shilling for each made beaver "to avail ourselves of the great care they have taken of their furs."[364]

McLoughlin later said that the expedition had cleared £3141.7.10. The 4000 pelts, he added, were "the best dressed beaver I have ever seen," and he predicted that due to the care with which they had been cleaned and handled they would be worth one quarter more than "former Snake Beaver."[365]

During Ogden's absence important changes in policy concerning the Snake Country expeditions had taken place. Governor George Simpson had reached Fort Vancouver on October 25, 1828, on his second inspection tour of the Columbia Department. With his usual thoroughness he reviewed every aspect of the firm's operations west of the Rockies. In general he was pleased with McLoughlin's management and with the progress which had been made since 1825.

He was particularly gratified by the success of his "fur desert" campaign in the Snake Country. "I cannot quit the subject of our Trapping Expeditions," he reported to the Governor and Committee in London, "without expressing my utmost satisfaction with the zeal, activity and perseverence manifested by Chief Trader Ogden, in the very arduous Service on which he has been employed for some years past."[366]

Simpson now considered the Snake Country "much exhausted," but thought that if American opposition could be eliminated the region would "afford employment" for a Company brigade of thirty or forty men for several years to come. "While it even defrays the expenses of such a party," he told the directors, "we consider it a good policy to keep them in that quarter."[367] In short, the Snake expeditions had largely accomplished their assigned task but were to be maintained on a modest scale to make certain that the "scorched earth" remained scorched and hence unattractive to competitors. Also, the pelts from the Snake Country still made up a significant portion of the Columbia Department's returns.[368]

The "Little Emperor" was quite sanguine in his expectations that American competition could be at least greatly reduced. He believed the trappers from Missouri and New Mexico, though numerous, were poorly organized and insufficiently financed. The proprietors of the several American concerns and the outfitters of the southern expeditions were, he maintained, "merely adventurers who have nothing to lose." He did not believe they possessed the capital required "to seat themselves down in regular apposition."[369]

As for the condutors of parties, he dismissed them condescendingly as "men who have been common Trappers and therefore possess no influence." But his highest scorn was reserved for the ordinary mountain men. The American trappers, he wrote in March, 1829, were "generally speaking, people of the worst character, run-aways from Jails, and outcasts from Society." He claimed that these men were so insubordinate that the Company "might repeatedly have broken up their parties" had it wanted to seduce them from their leaders, but not wishing to risk infecting its own trappers by contact with such rebellious spirits the firm allowed "as little intercourse as possible between them and our people." He asserted, with some lack of candor, that the concern's officers did not encourage the Americans to desert, although he admitted that there were then about ten or twelve "of their people in our Service."[370]

Simpson's confidence was partly based on reports which reached him concerning the high rate of casualties suffered by the Americans in the Snake Country and elsewhere from Indian attacks, particularly by the Blackfeet.[371] The American Trappers have been exceedingly

unfortunate," he told the Company's secretary during November, 1828.[372] And indeed their casualties had been significant -- at least ninety-four men killed by the natives between 1823 and 1829.[373] Simpson attributed these high losses to the "indiscreet" conduct of the Americans which often turned friendly Indians into enemies. "It is a well known fact," he wrote, "that War parties frequently pass our Camps without offering the least annoyance; yet will haunt and watch an American Camp, for Days and Weeks, until a favorable opportunity occurs to make an attack."[374] He might also have mentioned the hard lesson taught the Blackfeet by McDonald and the fact that the British usually hunted in larger parties than the Americans.

Another reason for Simpson's optimism was the news received from Ogden that several American parties he had met "complained of the poverty" of the Snake Country and had suffered crippling losses of horses.[375] This impression of the seeming disarray of the American fur trade was reenforced by events at Flathead Post during the winter of 1828-1829. Two separate parties of Missouri trappers, one headed by Jedediah Smith's partner, David E. Jackson, and the other by a rival independent trader, Joshua Pilcher, reached the vicinity of the Company's post after relatively poor hunts. Both leaders were forced to sell the British a sizeable percentage of their furs in order to obtain the supplies required for a return to their bases.[376]

Pilcher was so desperate, in fact, that he offered to trap for the Hudson's Bay Company on the headwaters of the Missouri where the British could not legally operate. Simpson may have suspected

a trap to get his concern in difficulties with the United States government, but snare or not he turned the proposal down with a pious and self-righteous declaration well designed to foil any attack on himself or his firm. "Although the protecting Laws of your Government might be successfully evaded by the plan you suggest," he replied to Pilcher on February 18, 1829, "still I do not think it would be reputable in the Honble Hudsons Bay Coy to make use of indirect means to acquire possession of a Trade to which it has no just claim."[377]

Simpson was also encouraged by the number of freemen who, after having deserted to the Americans, were returning to the Company's fold. A steep rise in the cost of goods at the American rendezvous between 1825 and 1827 had made it clear to many trappers, both British and American, that there was little money to be made in the mountains by the average common hunter, and the old concern, now that McLoughlin had reformed the freemen's terms, began to appear not so bad after all.[378]

Orders were issued to John Work, a clerk in the Colvile District, to attempt to "draw off" any "late deserters found attached to American camps, particularly near Flathead Post. These men "need not be apprehensive of harsh treatment from us," Simpson told Work. Old debts would be settled "liberally," supplies would be sold "cheap," and "large prices" would be paid for furs. Work was further told that if any "respectable" American trappers wished to join the Snake Expedition "there can be no objection if they deposit skins to cover the supplies they receive."[379] Clearly, if Simpson

was not actively soliciting Americans to desert neither was he discouraging them from doing so.

It was also realized by Simpson and McLoughlin, however, that an increase in the number of freemen at Flathead and in the Willamette Valley would cause problems for the concern. In the latter place, for example, the free hunters reduced the returns of Company parties operating from Fort Vancouver, and there was always the danger that furs gathered by these unattached men would be disposed of to American maritime traders along the lower Columbia rather than at the depot trade shop. In seeking a way out of this situation, Simpson hit upon an idea which slightly altered his previous concept of a proper future size for the Snake Expedition. On March 15, 1829, shortly before starting his return East, Simpson told McLoughlin that the brigade "should be increased to from 40 to 45 trappers if the Freemen expected from the Flat Heads can be induced to join -- otherwise kept at 30."[380] Other freemen were to be recruited for expeditions going south from Fort Vancouver.[381]

But the major change contemplated by Simpson for the Snake Brigade was in the leadership. For a couple of years notations in Ogden's journals had indicated that he suffered from occasional periods of illness, the nature of which is not clear. Evidently McLoughlin informed Simpson of Ogden's poor health, for on or before March 1, 1829, the governor told the London directors: "I am sorry to intimate, that the injury his constitution has sustained, by the privations and discomfort to which he has so long been exposed, will render it necessary to relieve him as soon as we can find a Gentleman

qualified to fill his place to advantage."[382]

By March 15, 1829, Simpson had found that qualified person. On that day he directed McLoughlin to appoint John Work as conductor of the Snake Expedition. Ogden was to be placed in charge of a strong post to be built at Nass on the Northwest Coast. Since the new establishment was to be erected the "next spring," it seems clear that Simpson intended Work to assume command of the Snake Brigade in the fall of 1829.[383]

The ink could scarcely have been dry on these instructions when word reached Fort Vancouver of two shocking developments at the mouth of the Columbia River. On the night of March 10, 1829, one of the Company's annual supply ships from London, the William and Ann, ran aground on the South Spit and by morning was a total loss. Not a soul on board survived. Among the dead were ten Hawaiians recruited at Oahu for service in the Columbia Department. Also lost was most of the vesel's cargo which contained a "good part" -- but not the larger part -- of the trade goods and supplies required for the department's operations during the business year beginning June 1, 1829 [Outfit 1829].[384]

The news of the second blow was received somewhat earlier. Toward the end of February the brig Owyhee from Boston had entered the river and soon began trading with the natives for furs. On March 10 she was joined by another vessel belonging to the same New England owner, the hermaphrodite brig Convoy.[385] Immediately upon hearing of the arrival of the Owyhee, Chief Factor McLoughlin

went down the river in a small boat to learn her business. He was shocked to hear that one or the other of the American vessels would remain on the Columbia all summer or even longer trading for pelts and fishing for salmon. Previously McLoughlin had considered such maritime competitors "as merely coasters who put in to collect a few Stragling Skins." Now, he told the London directors, he was faced by opponents who "intended to sit down and contest the trade with us."[386]

The Americans bartered their trade goods at a much lower tariff than that long employed by the Company. For example, they sold guns for six beaver pelts, whereas the British asked eighteen skins. McLoughlin at once lowered his prices, and trading parties were sent "in all directions" to intercept Indians bringing furs to the Americans. Fort George, abandoned since early 1825, was reactivated.[387] This competitive effort placed a great strain upon the Columbia Department's manpower, already low in numbers because of Simpson's economy measures. The loss of the William and Ann's crew and passengers made the situation worse.

To compound McLoughlin's difficulties, these twin disasters occurred at a time when Fort Vancouver was "without a months consumption of Goods" in its warehouses.[388] The trade war with the American vessels drained off this meager stock at a rapid rate, and without the William and Ann's cargo there was no way to replenish it immediately. The arrival of a second supply ship, the Ganymede, early in May with the remainder of the departmental outfit

somewhat eased the shortage but by no means ended it.[389]

By March 24 Governor Simpson had decided that there would not be sufficient men or goods to establish Nass during the spring of 1830.[390] Thus Ogden would be free to return to the Snake Country. On that date Chief Factor McLoughlin ordered Chief Trader John Warren Dease, then at Flathead, to leave 10 lodges, 30 elk shins, 100 chevreuil [mule deer] skins, 60 "Appechemons," 40 saddles, and 400 fathoms of pack cords at Walla Walla "for Mr Ogden."[391] All of these items were equipage required for a new Snake expedition. They were not needed to enable a returning one to get from Fort Nez Percés to the departmental depot. It is clear, therefore, that Ogden was to make at least one more journey to the Snake Country.

Ogden had acquired no taste for the arduous and dangerous life he had led during his five expeditions into the heart of the Far West. The once fiery and adventurous youth who had joined the North West Company at the age of twenty, was now a mature man of thirty-nine with responsibility for a large family. Almost surely he had already begun to wish, as he said later, "for a life of greater tranquility."[392]

But Ogden's reaction to word of his reappointment when he received it, probably during July at Walla Walla or at Fort Vancouver, is not known with certainty. Years afterwards he said only, "In 1829 I was appointed to explore the tract lying south of the Columbia, between that river and California."[393] He was drawn in that direction, he told Governor Simpson and the Council in 1831, because of his success on the Humboldt River during his previous

expedition and because of what the Indians there had told him of beaver farther south and west. In fact, so anxious was he to test this region that he had assured the Indians at the Humboldt Sink that "in three months they would see us again."[394] Simpson had promised the London directors during March, 1829, that should the brigades of 1828-1829 "discover fresh hunting grounds . . . we shall take the necessary measures to occupy them."[395] Evidently Ogden's journey of 1829-1830 was one of those measures.

In planning the route of his sixth Snake expedition, however, Ogden undoubtedly also had in mind what he had heard from Jedediah Smith in 1828 of the beaver resources of California's Central Valley. Certainly in his later accounts of his journey the British leader made reference to Smith's experiences in that general region, so he must have been well aware of where the American gathered the skins he later lost to the Indians on the Umpqua. Also, it is not to be supposed that the Company's officers, Ogden among them, were not anxious to exhaust this new field before Americans beat them to it.[396] Governor Simpson must have had these factors in mind when he told the Governor and Committee on August 26, 1830, that Ogden's route would depend on what he discovered about "American Trappers, some of whom, under the direction of Our old opponents Smith Jackson and Siblit, are still straggling about the Snake Country."[397]

Governor Simpson, Chief Factor McLoughlin, and Ogden himself realized perfectly well that this expedition would penetrate deep into Mexican territory. The prospect bothered them not a whit,

although Ogden was aware that if he approached the California settlements too closely he might be subjected to the same type of official harassment that Smith had suffered. The Company's cavalier attitude was well expressed by the "Little Emperor" when he told the London directors in March 1829: "in regard to the Territorial rights of the Mexican Republic, we follow the example of the Spanish functionaries on the Coast, and our opponents from the United States, by making no enquiries about them."[398]

Preparations for the 1829-1830 Snake expedition began long before Ogden reached Fort Vancouver toward the end of July, 1829. Early in March McLoughlin directed John W. Dease, manager of the Colvile District, to send forty bushels of wheat and corn to Walla Walla to be kept in storage for the Snake Brigade.[399] Two weeks later Dease, as has been seen, was reminded that he was to have a supply of leather goods and saddles -- items ordinarily obtained from his subordinate post at the Flatheads -- ready at Walla Walla for the same purpose.[400]

Apparently McLoughlin had some difficulty in assembling that part of the outfit supplied by Fort Vancouver. When Ogden reached the post the American opposition on the lower Columbia was still placing a severe strain on the department's stock of goods. At that time the depot warehouses contained only a thousand blankets and ninety trading guns, and since these were the articles most desired by the Indians, they were flowing out rapidly as the Yankee traders kept driving up the price of furs.[401] The situation was so tight

that McLoughlin had to let "Mr. Ogdens people" take his personal rifle.[402]

But one way or another the party was equipped, and Ogden set out up the Columbia by boat, evidently on August 18, 1829.[403] He was at Fort Nez Percés by the twenty-ninth of the month, only to encounter additional difficulties.[404] Supplies which were to have been sent down from Fort Colvile for his use had not arrived due to a misunderstanding as to where Ogden was to pick them up. He reported this mishap to McLoughlin but in reply received only sympathy and the comment that it was "now too late to do anything in this business."[405] How Ogden solved this problem is not yet apparent, but evidently he did.

More serious was the fact that Chief Trader Samuel Black, in charge at Walla Walla, had been unable to buy enough horses from the Indians to equip the party. "As you suggest I think the best you can do is to go to Nez Perces Camp and trade all you can," McLoughlin advised Ogden. If sufficient horses could not be obtained to supply everyone the men who were not equipped would have to be left behind and sent down to Fort Vancouver. "It is certainly distressing to find after all the pains that have been taken to complete your Party that all our trouble should be lost from the want of Horses," the "Big Doctor" wrote to Ogden on September 6, "however I hope you will be more successful than you apprehand and that you will be able to take all your party with you."[406]

The British ordinarily traded with the Nez Percés for horses in the vicinity of the present Lewiston, Idaho, at the junction of the

Snake and Clearwater Rivers; and Ogden wasted little time in taking himself there as is demonstrated by the fact that a letter from him received at Fort Vancouver was dated "River Leau Clare, Septr 17th."[407] Evidently he did not succeed in obtaining all the horses he required on the first attempt. When he left the "shores of the Columbia" sometime in September at least three of his men were then or afterwards left behind -- two at Walla Walla and one who turned up by early October at Flathead Post.[408] It is not certain that these men were detached because of a dearth of animals, but such a cause is not unlikely, since Ogden afterwards wrote: "It was late in October 1829 ere I finally succeeded on the South Branch of the Columbia [Snake River] in equipping my party with horses."[409]

Strangely enough accurate news of the difficulties surrounding the start of Ogden's sixth Snake expedition seems to have been a long time in reaching the eastern headquarters of Governor Simpson, who usually was rather quickly aware of the important happenings in his vast domain. A full year after the brigade left Fort Vancouver Simpson informed the London directors that the latest word from Ogden was dated September 30, 1829, at which time "he was proceeding up the South branch of the Columbia with his expedition well fitted out with goods and ammunition and horses -- and in high spirits."[410] One wonders who was misleading whom!

The journal and accounts Ogden kept during his sixth expedition were lost in the Columbia River while the party was returning to Fort Vancouver. Thus knowledge of the brigade's route and personnel

is largely confined to what can be gleaned from a couple of letters written by Ogden about eight months after his journey had ended and from several pages of his book, Traits of American Indian Life and Character, published anonymously in 1853. The account which can be pieced together from these and a few other sources is thin indeed, with many of the crucial points left uncertain and subject to varying interpretations. But at least the general outline of the journey seems reasonably clear.

If Ogden's memory served him correctly at the time he wrote his book, the party numbered thirty men when it left Fort Nez Percés.[411] Kit Carson, the famous American frontiersman, was with Ewing Young's band of trappers from Taos when they met Ogden's brigade in California during the spring of 1830, and he recalled years later that the British company was "sixty men strong."[412] Despite the fact that several writers have accepted Carson's figure, it seems probable that Ogden's estimate was closer to the truth.[413] Undoubtedly, however, the entire company was considerably larger when women, children, and Indians were counted. But on this occasion the number was not swelled by Ogden's own family, which had been left behind at Fort Nez Percés.[414]

From what Ogden told Governor Simpson and from his own later recollections it appears that the brigade moved out from Walla Walla to the Snake River where the period from the latter part of September until "late in October 1829" was spent trading horses from the natives. By the time sufficient animals had been acquired Ogden had almost

given up hope of making a fall hunt. In fact, he said, "I . . . would from the mountainous country I had to travel over almost [have] been justified in not starting" so late in the season.[415] But he remembered his satisfactory hauls of beaver along the Humboldt River and what he had learned of the promising prospects of the country beyond the lower reaches of that stream so, "rather sanguine" in his expectations, he turned southward and headed with all possible speed for the sink of his "Unknown River."[416]

During this journey through a bleak and inhospitable country, Ogden later recalled, "difficulties, many and greater than I had anticipated, began to crowd upon us . . . our sufferings and trials were truly great. There were times when we tasted no food, and were unable to discover water for several days together; without wood, we keenly felt the cold; wanting grass, our horses were reduced to great weakness, so that many of them died, on whose emaciated carcasses we were constrained to satisfy the intolerable cravings of our hunger, and as a last resource, to quench our thirst with their blood."[417]

These tribulations were endured for about a month, but the men persevered and finally reached Humboldt Sink. By that time it must have been late in November, and Ogden was disappointed to find the river and its outlet marsh and lake covered with ice and snow. "This then blasted all hopes of a fall hunt," he recalled somewhat more than a year later.[418]

As the brigade had advanced toward the sink, signs of Indians had become numerous, and on the day the outlet was reached a party

of scouts traveling in advance of the main company came upon a band of about fifty natives, who quickly fled. The scouts succeeded in capturing two of the Indians and held them for interrogation by Ogden. "We treated them with all possible kindness, and by signs endeavoured to express our wishes," the brigade leader later wrote. The captives refused to act as guides but did provide "some partial information" about the route ahead. Seeing that nothing more was to be gained, Ogden gave them "a few baubles" and let them go. "Wild as deer, they were soon out of sight."[419]

Ogden, with his usual skepticism concerning Indian character, was not at all sure that his humane treatment of the prisoners would result in any reciprocal good feeling on the part of their fellow tribesmen. "In my opinion, which is founded on general experience," he stated, such kindnesses were "directly opposed to the attainment of the desired end."

"It is something to hazard the remark," he continued, "yet I will venture the opinion, that had it, on the first discovery of new countries, been resolved to treat the savages with the greatest severity, the eventual sacrifice of many lives on their own part would have been avoided, and the murderous blow averted from many an unfortunate victim, whose only offence has been the heaping of undeserved favours on wretches whose hearts were callous to the emotions of gratitude."[420] On this particular occasion, at least, Ogden was proved absolutely correct.

The next day the two former captives returned, "accompanied by a large body of men, who soon became very troublesome." In fact they

showed such intense curiosity about everything, particularly about the manner in which the horses were secured and about the arrangements of the guard, that Ogden ordered them cleared from the camp.

At dawn the next morning, in accordance with Ogden's "invariable custom," he had "all the men aroused, the fires lighted, and the horses collected in the camp; this being the hour that Indians always fix upon for making their predatory attacks, it being then, as they say, that men sleep most soundly." Thus all the men were fully awake and preparing for a start when Ogden saw a "large body" of Indians approaching. He later estimated that the natives numbered "not less than four hundred," and he believed them "fully determined that we should proceed no further."[421] Since the Indians had appeared to be friendly the day before, Ogden let them approach, but when the natives hesitated in their advance as if expecting a hostile reception, he became suspicious.

His worst fears were soon confirmed when a "shower" of arrows poured into camp. Three horses were wounded, and Ogden believed his men escaped only because they were sheltered behind their "poor beasts." This, said Ogden, "was too much for our forbearance," and he ordered one of his hunters to return the fire with a rifle. A native fell, and the remainder took flight. "This was sufficient as a first lesson," Ogden later wrote, but he had little hope that the effect would long endure.[422]

Getting the brigade in motion, Ogden marched for six days on "nearly a south and south west course," until he "discovered" a

"fine large river but destitute of beaver." This stream was explored "from its sources" to its outlet in a "large salt lake." Almost surely he had found the present Walker River and Walker Lake in what is today western Nevada.[423] Continuing, probably in a southeasterly direction for a time to avoid the rough terrain west and south of Walker Lake and then south as more open country was reached, Ogden found himself in what he termed "the great sandy desert of Great Salt Lake." And in truth this barren region did stretch eastward to the Great Salt Lake; it was the "Great Sandy Plain" traversed by Jedediah Smith in 1827 and undoubtedly described by him to Ogden at Fort Vancouver.[424]

The brigade made its way south across the western fringes of this forbidding land during January, 1830. "We suffered severely both from the want of food and water; the party escaped with their lives but many of our horses died," Ogden later wrote. Relief, if it may be called that, came when the party reached "a range of rocky Mountains" -- probably the White Mountains or the Inyo Mountains, not far west of the present California-Nevada boundary. Deep snows and severe cold made the crossing dangerous and difficult, but the men broke through, perhaps by Westgard Pass, "without sustaining any loss."[425]

Shortly thereafter they came to another large stream which emptied into a salt lake. If the identification of Ogden's route thus far has been approximately correct, these features almost certainly were today's Owens River and Owens Lake. It must be noted,

however, that some historians believe Ogden was far to the east at this time, on Sevier River and Sevier Lake in the present Utah.[426]

From this point the evidence concerning the brigade's course is even more confusing. On March 12, 1831, months after his return to Fort Vancouver, Ogden reported to Governor Simpson and the Council on his route. He found no beaver near this new river and lake he reported, but the Indians nearby told him "that in a south west course I should find beaver." Thus he "continued on in the same direction; and in February I had the satisfaction of reaching the south west branch of the Rio Collarado which discharges in the Gulph of California. Here I found beaver very thinly scattered."[427]

Several well qualified scholars have identified Ogden's "south west branch of the Rio Collarado" as the present Mojave River.[428] It seems quite likely that the party did reach that stream and follow it eastward, but it appears improbable that Ogden would have called it a "branch" of the Colorado River. In the first place, the Mojave sinks in the desert long before reaching the Colorado, and there are no beaver along its banks and undoubtedly there were none in 1830.[429]

The fact that the Mojave is not a tributary of the Colorado has caused some persons to believe that Ogden did not reach the Colorado or even descend the Mojave to its sink.[430] On the other hand, Ogden distinctly stated on more than one occasion that he reached or almost reached the Gulf of California. During March, 1831, he wrote to his friend John McLeod that during his 1829-1830 expedition, "I extended my trails . . . to the Gulph of California but found beaver very scarce."[431] Upon his return to Fort Vancouver on July 6, 1830, Ogden

told McLoughlin that from the "unknown or Ogdens River" he went "south to the Rio Colorado which he descended till nigh the Gulph of California."[432] In view of these positive declarations, together with the fact that beaver were and are still to be found along the lower Colorado River, it would appear unsafe to assume that Ogden did not reach that stream and descend it to or nearly to the Gulf of California.[433] Unless additional information -- such as the report Ogden is known to have written after his return to Fort Vancouver and prior to October 11, 1830 -- turns up, this question and, indeed, most others concerning the exact route of his sixth expedition will have to remain subjects of speculation.

Somewhere south of Humboldt Sink -- Ogden's statement that the distance was only a three days' march south of that point cannot possibly be correct -- and after traveling through a land "as barren as ever Christian traversed," the brigade encountered a group of Indians "residing on the waters of the Rio Colorado." Probably this meeting occurred on the Mojave River or even on the Colorado itself. Ogden, who had been well briefed by Jedediah Smith, suspected that these natives were the Mojaves who treacherously attacked the American's party as it was crossing the Colorado River during the summer of 1827 and massacred ten men.[434]

The British trappers were "eager" to revenge this savage slaughter, but Ogden was not completely certain that he was facing the guilty parties. For one thing, the Indians who attacked Smith had possessed horses, and Ogden could find no hoof prints in the

vicinity.[435] Therefore, though still wary, he refused to let his men take the offensive.

The next day, Ogden later recounted, the Indians "swarmed about the camp, every man carrying,, in addition to his proper arms, a long stick on his shoulder, in derision of the manner in which we carry our guns." Alarmed by this insolence and by the large number of the natives, Ogden put his party on the alert. An extra guard was posted over the horses, and each man was given a "spear" to augment his usual weapons, with orders that if attacked they were not to reload after firing but were to charge immediately at the attackers. Then a few Indians were admitted to the camp in the hope that sight of this preparedness would dissuade their companions from undertaking any hostile action. "Unhappily for them," said Ogden, "the desired effect was not produced."

Shortly thereafter the Indians attempted to drive off the brigade's horses, wounding a guard in the process. "This was sufficient for me," said Ogden. He ordered his men to fire. Twenty-six Indians "were made to lick the dust," and the remainder fled. No charge with the spears was required, as no opponents could be found.[436]

Apparently it was following this incident that Ogden turned north and "crossed over to the South Branch of the Bonaventura" -- the present San Joaquin River in the Central Valley of California.[437] On the way he avoided the Mexican towns and ranches toward the coast,

"not wishing," as he said, "in case of accidents of going too near the Spanish settlements."[438] But the route by which he entered the San Joaquin Valley remains in doubt. Currently historians seem to favor Tehachapi Pass, although Walker Pass has long had its advocates.[439] In truth there seems to be no hard evidence favoring either theory.

In any case, Ogden was undoubtedly correct when he later said that the brigade trapped the San Joaquin River "from its sources" north to its outlet in San Francisco Bay. While moving down the valley in that spring of 1830 Ogden's trappers took 1000 beaver. He soon had reason to believe himself fortunate to have made such a good hunt, for near the mouth of the river he was overtaken by a party of American fur hunters under the command of Ewing Young. This group of about twenty men from New Mexico, "well loaded with traps," had descended the Great Valley hard on Ogden's heels, and if they had been ahead of him they would have ruined the hunt of the Hudson's Bay brigade.[440]

The meeting appears to have been a reasonably friendly one. Evidently neither party was willing to let the other get ahead, so for ten days they "kept company" while they traveled up "the North branch of the Bonaventura" -- today's Sacramento River -- as far as its junction with Pit River.[441] If Ogden took notice of a stocky young man named Christopher Carson in Young's party he made no mention of it. Trapping was poor as the companies worked northward, and the reason was soon evident. They came upon the track made by

Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod's brigade during its expedition from Fort Vancouver to the Central Valley of California in 1829. McLeod reported that he had "drained" the region of beaver, a claim with which Ogden and Young could well agree.[442]

By the time the Pit River was reached, Young and his trappers were disgusted with the prospects ahead. "Empty handed," they gave up their plan to test the Willamette region and turned back to try their fortune once more in the more central portions of California.[443] With them or joining them soon afterwards was one of Ogden's men whose name has not yet been determined.[444]

Ogden now found that Pit River, which he had named and partially explored during his 1826-1827 journey, was the "north branch of the Boreantura [Buenaventura]," and indeed it is the main stream of the Sacramento River although it does not bear that name above its junction in Shasta Lake with the smaller branch today called the Upper Sacramento.[445]

"On reaching Pitt River," Ogden reported, "I was no longer a stranger to the country."[446] He followed the stream in a northwest direction, retracing his earlier track from about the present Canby to at least Goose Lake and probably on to Malheur Lake.[447] All that is known for certain about his route beyond the source of Pit River is that he went "from thence to Walla Walla."[448] It is quite likely, however, that from Malheur Lake he turned almost directly north and made his way up Silvies River, then over the upper drainage of the John Day River, and across the Umatilla River along a general line

employed by John Work in 1831 and again in the summer of 1832. Home base was reached on June 30, 1830.[449]

Although Ogden was relieved to arrive "in safety" he wasted no time in resting. Leaving his horses at Fort Nez Percés, he embarked in a "crazy boat" placed at his disposal and started down the Columbia with some of his men and part of his returns. All went well until July 3 when he reached The Dalles, one of the river's most formidable rapids where, Ogden wrote years later, "the mighty waters roll along with irresistable fury."[450]

Despite the terrifying appearance of the torrent, the Company's voyageurs did not ordinarily consider the place particularly dangerous. A portage was made around the worst rapid, and the boat was returned to the water at its base. Ogden had planned to eat breakfast at this spot, but the odor of rotting salmon was so offensive that he designated another location farther downstream for this "important event of the day." Sending his party ahead in the boat to make preparations, he started to walk to the appointed place. At least one other member of the party also continued on foot. He was that grand old freeman of the Willamette, Alexander Carson, who at the last moment was replaced in the boat by another American, Bache Goodrich, to "run the rapid."[451]

Ogden watched the boat set out bravely from shore, but to his horror the craft was quickly caught in a whirlpool. Accounts differ as to what happened next. Ogden later said that the men "bent to their oars with redoubled energy," but were powerless to escape from

the "whirling vortex."[452] Chief Factor McLoughlin reported only a few months after the tragedy that the boatmen lost "their presence of mind" and dropped their paddles.[453] In any case, the stern was sucked down, the prow rose in the air, and there was one last cry of terror from the occupants. The boat spun helplessly until it disappeared completely under the swirling waters.

Only one man, "poor Baptiste," the steersman, managed to save himself. He grasped four empty kegs which had been lashed together and was fortunate enough to be washed ashore several miles downstream.[454] The remaining nine men in the boat were drowned, together with the wife of Joseph Portneuf and her two children. Among the dead were several of the most valuable veterans of the Snake Country expeditions, including Antoine Sylvaille, Joseph Portneuf, and Joseph Grenier.[455] Also lost were Ogden's journal, all his papers, and between 300 and 500 beaver pelts.[456]

Half an hour after the accident the boat brigade from Fort Vancouver bringing the annual outfits for the interior posts arrived on the scene. These craft passed over the site of the disaster "in perfect safety," and McLoughlin seems to have believed that Ogden's boat could have done the same had the crew kept their heads. There was little the newcomers could do except to help in searching for possible survivors and in recovering the bodies of the dead, though some of the latter were found only after "long intervals." It is not known how Ogden completed his journey, but he reached the depot on July 6, 1830.[457]

The returns from Ogden's sixth and last Snake expedition amounted to only 1295 large and small beaver, 90 land otter, and a few other miscellaneous furs.[458] McLoughlin was disappointed by these results, as was Ogden himself, but the Columbia manager put the best possible face on the situation. "The country visited last winter by Mr. Ogden is the poorest in Furs that he had hitherto explored as your honors will see by the diminuation of his Returns," McLoughlin explained to the London directors, "but as it was a new country we could not know how it was Stocked in Beaver till we had explored it." He pointed out that Ogden had examined the territory between the Columbia River on the north and the Colorado River and California on the south, except for a strip along the coast and some of the region between the Klamath River and San Francisco Bay.[459] All this knowledge, he seems to have implied, was reward enough for the expense of the expedition.

Ogden was more apologetic. "Although our returns were one third less than last year," he wrote to the Governor and the Council on March 12, 1831, "I trust from the extent of country I explored the want of returns will not be attributed to want of exertions but alone to the poverty of the country over which I have no control."[460]

McLoughlin's appraisal proved in the long run to be correct. Ogden's expedition, besides being a remarkable journey of discovery, demonstrated to the Company that the region south of Humboldt Sink was poor in beaver even though Ogden himself wished to make another attempt to test it. But the most important results of Ogden's last jouney to the Snake Country related to California. On February 13,

1830, Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod had returned to Fort Vancouver after a disastrous trapping expedition to the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys during 1829. His "report of the country and the difficulties to which a party could be exposed in hunting it," caused Governor Simpson in 1831 to decide to abandon further trapping brigades to California.[461] But when he learned that Ogden had been able to collect 1000 beaver along the San Joaquin and, above all, that American trappers were operating in the region, he was galvanized to action. The "fur desert" was not yet desert enough in that direction. He reversed himself in the summer of 1832 and decided to continue trapping in the Central Valley.[462]

Word that Ogden had found the Snake Country "much exhausted and still overrun by American Trappers" also caused Governor Simpson concern. The returns, he told the London directors, "are less in value and quantity than any we have had from that quarter but the Expedition still pays tolerably well, and it is our intention to keep it constantly employed while it clears its expenses."[463]

When Ogden returned to Fort Vancouver he learned that the London Committee had approved his appointment to head the party to establish a post at Nass.[464] The Snake Country, on which he had so indelibly marked his stamp, was to see him no more. Several place names in today's Utah commemorate his pioneer entrance into Ogden Valley in 1825, and if it had not been for John C. Frémont the Hunboldt River, which Ogden added to the map, probably would be called Ogden River today. As one historian has said, "he led large

fur brigades over more territory than any other man, with the possible exception of Jedediah Smith"[465] Except for the region south of the Humboldt, which Ogden had hoped to investigate on a future expedition, and a few fringe afeas, the Snake Country was well known to trappers by the middle of 1830. The exploring responsibilities of the Snake Brigade were largely over.

John Work -- loyal, able, and perpetually discontented -- was still available to replace Ogden in the Snake Country. On March 20, 1830, Chief Factor McLoughlin directed Work to relinquish his management of the Colvile District and to report to Fort Vancouver as soon as the business of transferring his command could be completed. He was to bring with him "the horses from the differant places," so he probably was some weeks in reaching the depot.[466] Evidently he was at headquarters when Ogden returned from California early in July.

Ogden's reaction to the news that he was to be superseded as head of the Snake Party seems to have been relief for himself mixed with sympathy for Work. He later wrote to a colleague: "Our friend Work has succeeded me in the Snake country . . . . surely this man deserves a more substantial reward than he now enjoys it is an unpleasant situation he fills. I wish him every success but it is all a lottery."[467]

Ogden's tired men had more of a rest at Fort Vancouver than McLoughlin had intended because Work, who was to take them back to the field, was delayed in starting upriver by the nonarrival of a

boat.[468] On July 28, 1830, Chief Trader McLeod reached the depot with the remainder of his Southern Expedition, and some of his men were detailed to fill out the Snake Brigade. Thus strengthened, Work's party finally got under way on August 4. Ogden went along to assist with the final arrangments at Fort Nez Percés.[469]

The company reached Walla Walla on August 15, and a few days were spent in outfitting with horses, appechemons, and other necessities which had been assembled there by McLoughlin's order.[470] On the twentieth the men were sent off to the foot ofthe Blue Mountains while Work remained at the post to complete his paper work.

It was Governor Simpson's intention that Work's route should be determined, as had Ogden's in 1829-1830, by what he could learn about activities of American trappers.[471] But Chief Factor McLoughlin had something more definite in mind. As early as July 13, 1830, he knew that Work would be stopping in the vicinity of the Big Wood River, north of the Snake, for a short hunt.[472] At Walla Walla on August 21 Ogden gave Work a long letter of advice concerning the forthcoming expedition. "You having requested my opinion relating to the route you should take . . . as I am not authorized to give you instructions I shall merely state the track I had intended following had I returned," he wrote. But although this delicately put in the form of suggestions, it is almost certain that his proposals reflected the desires of the "Big Doctor" at departmental headquarters. Ogden advised Work to go to the Boise River and the Big Wood River, from there to the Salmon River if the weather

permitted, then to the Snake River, Bear River, and the Humboldt River, and then to explore south of the latter stream to see if another river reported by Indians actually existed. The return should be by way of the Owyhee River.[473]

Work, still only a clerk in rank but destined to be a Chief Trader before the year was out, left Fort Nez Percés on August 22, 1830, and that same day joined his brigade in the Walla Walla Valley. He found his party to be made up of, in addition to himself, 37 men, 1 male Indian slave and 2 youths, making 41 persons bearing arms; 29 women, 22 boys, and 23 girls, a total of 114 "Souls."[474] Most of the men were Canadians, but there were two Americans, six halfbloods, two Iroquois, and one Nippissing Indian. The 272 horses and mules were "pretty well laden" with 21 lodges, provisions for the first part of the journey, and 337 traps.[475]

At the outset Work followed the well-trodden brigade trail south over the Blue Mountains and via the Grande Ronde, Powder River, and Burnt River to the Snake. The company then ascended the south bank of the Snake for about thirty miles and camped preparatory to crossing. On September 7 the veteran American trapper, Alexander Carson, and five men were detached to hunt the Weiser and Payette Rivers and to "cross the Mountains" to trap "some of the branches of Salmon River." They were instructed to return to Walla Walla by early July, 1831.[476]

The next day the main party, which Work considered still strong enough to resist the expected Blackfoot raiders, forded to the north

side of Snake River and followed it to the Payette River, which was ascended a short distance. Work then crossed southeasterly to the Boise River, striking it somewhere near today's Middleton, Idaho. Hunting was not very productive along the Payette and the Boise, so Work left the latter stream above the site of the present Boise and traveled eastward across the Snake Plain to Camas Prairie and then on to Willow Creek. Here four men visiting their traps were ambushed by a band of Blackfeet. Two were killed and one was wounded. In addition, this same marauding band had by then stolen twenty-five traps, and the brigade was to be harassed by these horse-hungry, bloodthirsty raiders for weeks to come.

Work reached Wood River on September 28, 1830. Trapping was fair on this stream, and the company remained along its lower course for almost two weeks. But then they encountered a group of American Fur Company men under Joseph Robidoux. Work's object at this time was "to reach Salmon River with as little delay as possible," but he was not anxious to lead the American rivals there. Thus on October 12 he struck out northeastward over the plain in the direction of Big Lost River, hoping to escape Robidoux who had already started north up Wood River. But when the Americans saw where the Company men were headed, they followed in Work's track. To evade the competition, Work turned northward into the mountains and reached Big Lost River in the general vicinity of the present Darlington, Idaho. From here the route was northwesterly to the Salmon River near the present Challis.

Crossing the Salmon, several days were wasted beating about the rugged country to the west where Alexander Ross had found such unproductive hunting in 1824. Finding the going rough and fearing the onslaught of winter, Work ordered a retreat. The party descended Salmon River as far as the Lemhi River and then turned south up the latter stream. Winter had now arrived with a vengeance, and trapping was poor in the iced-over waters. From the upper Lemhi the party crossed the divide through two feet of snow to reach Birch Creek on the last day of November, 1830.

Hoping to find buffalo to feed his hungry people and grass for the horses, Work turned westward by Pass Creek to Little Lost River, which was descended to its sinks. A number of buffalo were killed on the way, and good feed for the animals was found near the sinks of Big Lost River. Continuing southward across the Snake Plain the brigade reached the Snake River near today's Blackfoot, Idaho, on December 17. For several weeks the trip had been hard on the horses, and a number died from cold and fatigue before reaching the good grass near Ogden's old winter quarters in the vicinity of Ferry Butte. And here, on the south (or east) bank, Work remained for three months, moving camp occasionally as grass and wood became exhausted.

The winter of 1830-1831 was unusually severe throughout the Snake Country, and Work's company suffered greatly from the cold. Buffalo were reasonably plentiful, but they were lean because deep or hard-crusted snow made it difficult for them to feed. By the end of March these beasts, so valuable to the fur traders and trappers,

were dying in large numbers. The same harsh conditions so weakened the brigade's horses that they were nearly useless for hunting buffalo. The camp was almost constantly harassed by Indian horse thieves, who managed to make off with a number of animals. By the end of March the buffalo were in such bad condition and so difficult to reach that the party was "much in want" of fresh food. "For some time past," Work noted on March 30, the people "have been living on their small stock of dry provisions which had been provided for the journey. this I much regret as it will cause loss of time to replace it."[477]

The most exciting event of the winter was the arrival on April 14, 1831, of fifty-seven American Fur Company trappers under the command of Lucien Fontanelle and Andrew Dripps. They were passing from their winter quarters on the Bear and Logan Rivers to the upper Snake and Flathead regions. "Our people," Work wrote in his journal, "are like to be devoured by the American freemen who seem to be starving, and ready to give anything they have got to procure a little dried meat."[478]

Two of Work's men wished to desert and join the Americans. Fontanelle refused to have anything to do with them unless they settled their accounts with Work and paid their debts to the Company. Since the would-be deserters were freemen, Fontanelle told them they could expect no supplies from him. This honorable conduct was much appreciated by Work. "Were people who have to deal with these scoundrels in this country to act mutually in a similar manner to Mr. Fontanelle there would be much less difficulty with roguish men," he wrote.[479]

This firm stand discouraged one of the discontents but the other, Baptiste Tyaquariche, insisted on leaving and paid fifteen beaver which nearly cleared his debt. But when Baptiste started to take a Company horse with him, giving in its place one he had left with nearby Indians, Work seized the loaded animal to hold it back. Some of the Iroquois in the American party came to the aid of Baptiste, upon which several of Work's companions took up their guns. A bloody clash was narrowly averted, and Work retained the horse. But it had been a close call.[480]

On April 19 the Company's Snake Expedition raised camp and started southward up Bannock Creek but on reaching its upper waters found there was too much snow for trapping and even for further progress in that direction. Retreating to Snake River, the men found quite satisfactory trapping as far down as American Falls and on to Raft River. The latter stream was ascended for the purpose of killing buffalo and drying the meat as well as hunting beaver.

Near the headwaters of Raft River Work split his party on May 12, 1831. Veteran Charles Plante was placed in charge of seven men and sent westward to hunt on the Owyhee River's eastern fork, the present Blue Creek. Work with the main company intended to go in a more southerly direction to reach the Humboldt River and then to go on to the upper Owyhee River. Entering the Great Basin on the thirteenth, he reached the plain of Great Salt Lake and the next day struck "Mr. Ogden's usual road to Ogden's river [the Humboldt]."

This trail was followed westwardly until, on May 22 at Snow Water Lake, he deviated to the northwest "in hopes to reach the

[Humboldt] river sooner and fall upon it a few days march higher up than by the usual route."[481]

The East Fork of the Humboldt between the present Wells and Death, Nevada, was reached the next day. Work next moved northward to another branch, Marys River, which the party ascended only to find the trapping poor. Crossing into the Snake drainage, they reached Bruneau River but soon left it and went westward to the South Fork of the Owyhee River at the site of the present Wild Horse Reservoir. Work found this region "a very poor country." Both beaver and game were scarce, and provisions were running low. No Indians were seen, so not even a few roots, "bad as they are," could be obtained to feed the hungry.

Work quickly removed himself from this inhospitable land and moved south to the North Fork of the Humboldt River. Before doing so, however, he detached seven men to continue down the Owyhee River to the Snake and then take the outward trail back to Walla Walla. "These men," he noted, "are all half Indians, some of them with large families, and placing too much reliance on their capability as hunters did not take so much precaution as the other men to provide a stock of food previous to leaving the buffalo, they are therefore now entirely out of provisions and it is expected they will have a better chance of killing Antelopes & chivereau [deer] when only a few than when the camp are altogether."[482]

Instead of following down the North Fork of the Humboldt, Work crossed to the upper waters of another branch of the Owyhee. Not finding many beaver here, he again turned southward and at last

reached the Humboldt near the present Carlin, Nevada, on June 17. Mosquitoes in "innumberable swarms" made life miserable for both men and horses. The animals were so tormented that they could not feed even after a long march without grass. Most of the people were so low on provisions that "they now have no other resource but to kill horses."

The party moved down the river, but the water was so high that only one beaver was caught. Mosquitoes and sand flies made life almost unbearable, and without other food two men each slaughtered one of their horses. Discouraged, Work left the Humboldt east of today's Winnemucca on June 21 and cut across to the Little Humboldt River.

After ascending this latter stream for a day, Work turned westward and reached Quinn River. Following up the Quinn to near its source, the party turned northwestwardly to the foot of Steen Mountain. During all this journey grass was extremely scarce, and the men were forced to kill more horses, "the companions of their labours." Work continued northward along the eastern base of Steens Mountain for about twenty-eight miles and then cut across the range to Malheur Lake. From this point the route back to Fort Nez Percés was roughly the well-known one up Silvies River, across to the John Day River, and then over the Blue Mountains.

Work and an advance party reached Walla Walla on July 18, 1831. All the groups he had detached during the expedition had already arrived or came in within two days. Alexander Carson's company had lost all their horses and a pack and a half of beaver pelts to Indian

thieves. "The loss was the result of a great degree of negligence," Work recorded with anger. Two more animals had been stolen from the party of mixed-bloods he had sent off from the upper Owyhee River early in June. These men also made "very few beaver." Plante's detachment could only report a similar poor hunt. All in all, the brigade had experienced the loss of eighty-two horses. Work was thoroughly disgusted.[483]

Neither was he pleased with the financial results of his expedition. "My last campaign in the Snake country was not so successful as I had anticipated," he wrote to a friend on September 6, 1831; "the returns and profits were nevertheless pretty fair considering the exhausted state of the country and the great severity and unusual length of the winter." But he had something for which to be thankful. "I escaped with my scalp last year," he added. "I much doubt whether I shall be so fortunate this time."[484]

McLoughlin was not overjoyed either, but ever since March 8 when he had received Work's November report from the field, he had been prepared for bad news, though he had long been hopeful of better results. Work had reported taking 700 pelts up to November 12, 1830, a number which the gentlemen at Fort Vancouver considered a "fair commencement."[485]

McLoughlin interpreted Work's November letter as further proof that the Snake Country was "nearly exhausted."[486] But the "Big Doctor" was not ready to give up on the region. In February, 1830, he had said that "Columbia beaver sells higher per skin than any in

America."[487] Many of those skins came from the Snake Country, and McLoughlin was determined to send Work back to get more of them.

With this objective in mind, McLoughlin told Chief Trader Simon McGillivray at Fort Nez Percés on May 10, 1831, to trade "all the Horses you can as you may depend Mr Work will want more this year than he did last."[488] This admonition was repeated on August 3, with the added detail that Work would require about 130 horses in addition to the survivors from the 1830-1831 expedition.[489]

Work and his party brought their furs down to Fort Vancouver by early August. The discouraged bourgeois must have been somewhat heartened by receiving from Dr. McLoughlin his commission as a Chief Trader.[490] But if Work experienced a moment of cheer, it did not last long. Malaria was raging at the depot, and a number of his people came down with the fever, some so severely that they had to remain behind. "This I much regret," he told a friend, "as my numbers at first were too weak."[491]

On August 18, 1831, Chief Trader Work left Fort Vancouver bound for his second Snake expedition. He stopped the first night at the Company's sawmill, a few miles above the depot, to join his men who had been sent there for their regale. The next morning the men had sobered up enough to get started up the Columbia in four boats. As the journey progressed more and more people became ill until "every boat was like a hospital."[492] At one point Work believed that he would not be able to reach Walla Walla, but after strenuous efforts on the part of those still able to function the boats arrived there on August 30.

A week was spent at Fort Nez Percés collecting and distributing horses, giving out supplies and provisions, and allowing the sick to recuperate. Not only was the number of horses deficient, but the quality of those available was so inferior that Work believed "little or no work can be expected to be done with them." Most of the sick men insisted on starting even though Work predicted that the worst of them would be "inadequate" for the journey and would "most likely die on the way." In the end, though, only three had to be left behind.[493] The armament of the company included one "cannon."

On September 8 and 9 the main company got under way up the Walla Walla Valley. The number of persons in the party was not mentioned in Work's journals, but the names of fifty-five different men are mentioned from time to time in that record. Apparently some recruits had been found at Fort Nez Percés. In addition, there were the usual families, among them Work's three small daughters.[494] The children were brought along despite the fact that Work predicted before his departure that he would be visiting "a much more dangerous part of the country than . . . we passed last year" and that his party would be "too weak for the undertaking."[495]

Work himself left Fort Nez Percés on September 11, 1831, and caught up with his brigade that same day. The whole party moved off together the next morning.

If there exists a clear statement of Work's instructions it has not yet been seen by the present writer. It seems evident, however, that Work, both from the field and when he was at Fort Vancouver, had expressed his opinion to Dr. McLoughlin that the

southern portion of the Snake Country had been so thoroughly stripped of beaver by both the British and the Americans that it would "not afford employment for a Party sufficiently strong to protect themselves."[496] "The Blackfoot and F[lat]head lands," he told a friend just before leaving Walla Walla, ". . . is the only quarter now where there is a likelihood of making anything."[497]

McLoughlin evidently agreed with this suggestion to try hunting north of the Salmon River, but he saw a danger. "The Lands laying north of the Flatheads, which Mr. Work mentions, I believe, are on the East side of the Mountains" -- in other words in United States territory where it was illegal for the British to hunt -- he told Governor Simpson in March, 1831. "If South of 49 [degrees] we cannot go there," he added, "and if North of 49 I think we ought not to go." He did imply, however, that prospects for a profitable hunt elsewhere were dim. Still, on September 9, 1831, he reminded Chief Trader Heron at Fort Colvile, who was planning to dispatch some traders with the annual hunting party of the Flatheads, "that the Honble Committee has directed that we are not to send any of our people South of 49 on the East side of the mouhtains."[498]

Yet Work, when he left Fort Nez Percés, knew he was "starting for the borders of the Blackfoot and F[lat]head lands."[499] And he later admitted in his journal that he intended to visit "several branches of the Missouri."[500] One can only conclude that McLoughlin and Work believed that a profitable hunt would sooth the Committee's ire.

During the first part of his journey Work named very few of the streams he encountered or places he camped. And he may have misnamed the one large river which could have provided the key to his route. He said he followed the Salmon River for a considerable distance, but at least one knowledgeable historian believes this stream may actually have been the Clearwater.[501]

At any rate, it seems agreed that he went in a generally eastward direction from Walla Walla, crossed the Snake River, and from there made his way to a large opening he called "Camass Plains" not far from the present Kamiah, Idaho. The Indian track used by Lewis and Clark and known later as the Lolo Trail had its western terminus in this general area, and Work's brigade struggled eastward along this ancient route, battling through snow and dense woods, and climbing up and down steep slopes and along ridge tops until the Bitterroot Range was crossed. On October 13, 1831, Work and his exhausted followers reached Lolo Hot Springs in the present Montana, the first point during the journey which can be positively identified.

The company proceeded down Lolo Creek, and in this vicinity beaver began to be caught, evidently for the first time since leaving Walla Walla. When the Bitterroot River was reached, Work turned down it to the Clark Fork of the Columbia at Hell's Gate near the present Missoula. The latter stream was ascended a few miles to the entrance of the Blackfoot River, the course of which was followed, though not always closely, eastward to the general vicinity of the present Ovando, Montana. On the way Work was discouraged to learn from the some

Flatheads that both Indians and Americans had been trapping in the region ahead of him, including on several branches of the Missouri "which we intended to visit."[502] Indifferent returns soon proved this information to be only too true.

Hoping to improve their fortunes in a region rumored to be rich in beaver, the men planned to turn northeast up a branch stream even though it would lead them into "the Blackfoot country" known to be "very dangerous."[503] On October 31 the hunters and trappers scattered to their various tasks. Three of the men were surprised by a party of Blackfeet. Two of them were killed, and the other had a very narrow escape. The same band of marauders stole a number of traps, three horses, and three guns -- a serious loss to the brigade.

The next day Work noted in his journal: "Buried the remains of our unfortunates who came to such an untimely end yesterday by the hands of the inhuman, murderous Blackfeet."[504] It is little wonder that his men henceforth attacked almost every Blackfoot they saw.

Work now gave up the idea of going north and turned southeast and reached Clark Fork once more. The march was continued up that stream southward past the vicinity of the present Deer Lodge, Montana, and Warmsprings to Deer Lodge Pass. On November 10, 1831, the brigade crossed this easy gap and entered the Missouri River drainage, where it had no legal right to trap or trade. Hunting continued, however, as the party reached the Big Hole River and worked it way downstream to about five miles below the present Melrose. Leaving the Big Hole, Work led his men southward to the

Beaverhead River near the famed Lewis and Clark and fur-trader landmark, Beaverhead Rock, downsteam from the present Dillon.

By that time many of the smaller streams were closed by ice, and trapping was largely unproductive. Grass for the horses had been scarce, but buffalo provided enough food for the men. Work proceeded a short distance up the Beaverhead, going slowly to take advantage of some good grass which had escaped the buffalo. Blackfeet were seen as was expected, since one of their main routes of travel passed this way. "There is little necessity for our hurrying on," Work commented, "as the danger from the Blackfeet is the same wherever we can go."[505]

While the brigade was camped near the present Dillon on the night of November 23-24, a band of Blackfeet attacked the men guarding the horses and attempted to stampede the herd. Disaster was prevented by the brave action of a guard named Champagne, who succeeded in turning the animals. At the same time the Indians fired into the main camp, but they retreated when Work discharged his cannon in their direction. One of the guards was dangerously wounded during the fray but eventually recovered.

The march was continued on November 27. The company moved up the Beaverhead River to the site of the present Amstead, Montana. From there the route was westerly up Horse Prairie Creek and its upper waters. On December 11, a few miles west of the present Brenner, a party of Blackfeet was observed near camp. Some of Work's men went in pursuit and drove the Indians into a willow thicket where

they could not be seen. The trappers poured fire into the hiding place all day long, but when night came the natives escaped, though perhaps not without casualties.

On December 15, Ogden's band crossed Lemhi Pass, leaving the Missouri drainage behind. The Lemhi River, a branch of the Salmon, was soon reached. Work had hoped to find buffalo in this region, but neither the Flatheads nor the American trappers who were along the Salmon in force were doing much more than staying alive. Disgusted, Work turned southward up the Lemhi. By New Year's Day, 1832, the cold weather had moderated, and buffalo became more plentiful. Work allowed his men to rest for the holiday and enjoy the "dram and some cakes" he passed out in the morning.

From the general vicinity of the present Leadore, Idaho, Work once more turned northeastward, and on January 5, 1832, he recrossed the Continental Divide through Bannock Pass and was again on the upper waters of the Missouri River, and in United States territory. He was now back on Horse Prairie Creek, which he descended to the narrows near the present Brenner. Here the British and some Flathead Indians with them got into a fire fight with about twenty Blackfeet. The latter retreated into the same thicket that had sheltered their fellow tribesmen in late November; and as in that case the quarry escaped during the night. Work marveled that most of them got away unscathed. "The willows were completely lashed with the balls," he noted. He regretted that the "whole of them" had not been killed.[506]

Work's objective now was to find buffalo to provide provisions for the homeward journey. After a short detour up Red Rock Creek,

he retraced his fall track, going down the Beaverhead to below today's Dillon. Buffalo were encountered in large numbers in the region, and much meat was obtained. But also the Blackfoot raiders became bold and troublesome. On two successive nights they managed to get away with horses. Finally, at dawn on January 30, while the brigade seemingly was camped on Birch Creek, about three hundred Blackfeet, yelling and firing their guns, attacked. The trappers and the Indians who were traveling with them returned the fire so effectively that the Blackfeet pulled back to the woods and hills surrounding the camp. A brisk fire was exchanged until noon, when the attackers left the field. Work thought it the better part of valor not to pursue such a numerous force. The defenders lost one Flathead Indian killed and three natives wounded, one trapper fatally wounded and another seriously wounded, and Work's "little W[alla] W[alla] I[n]d[ian] house-keeper" dangerously wounded.[507] Another man and Work himself were slightly wounded.

The Blackfeet continued to steal horses. "They were so numerous," the bourgeois later told a friend, "I was able to make no hunt."[508] It was quite evident that the Blackfeet had forgotten the lesson given them by McDonald in 1823; they were now attacking the British and the Americans indiscriminately.

Giving up the unprofitable struggle against these foes and against the snows and severe cold of the upper Missouri, Work turned back and slowly followed his path back across Bannock Pass to the Lemhi Valley. The Lemhi was reached on March 10, 1832.

Work's immediate need was for buffalo meat, but his horses were so worn down that the men frequently could not get close to their quarry. During the brigade's march northward down the Lemhi, a youth of the party ate some hemlock root by mistake and died. A short distance from the mouth of the Lemhi Work turned west and crossed over to Salmon River, which he struck about six miles south of the present city of Salmon.

At this point a "small skin canoe" was built or otherwise obtained, and on March 26 four men started down Salmon River bound for Fort Nez Percés. "It is expected they will make a good hunt," Work wrote in his journal, "as this part of the river is not known to have ever been hunted by whites." Work had the impression that "Lewis and Clark passed down this in canoes."[509] He had forgotten, if he ever knew, that Clark had scouted down this "River of No Return" and had decided against braving its fearsome rapids. This rash venture ended in disaster. Two of the men were drowned, and the other two, who were walking along the shore when the canoe was wrecked, finally reached Walla Walla "quite naked."[510]

Work and the main party proceeded upstream through the Salmon River Gorge to the hot spring near the present Challis, Idaho. Then Then the brigade left the Salmon and traveled southeast to Big Lost River. It had been Work's intention to cross westward to the upper Big Wood River, but there was too much snow on the intervening mountains. Thus he descended Big Lost River, moving slowly to trap and hunt buffalo, and then passed westward along the base of the mountains at the northern edge of the Snake Plains. The yields of

beaver were reasonably good considering how intensively this area had been trapped. At Big Wood River there was still too much snow to cross the mountains to the upper Salmon drainage, so Work decided to attempt an approach from the southwest. "Perhaps we may find another road by Read's River [Boise River] to cross the mountains," he remarked in his journal. "The head of Read's River is not known to have ever been trapped by whites, and is said to be rich in beaver."[511]

Continuing westward to Camas Prairie, Work turned northward and reached Little Smoky and Big Smoky Rivers, in the drainage of Boise River. The men complained that beaver were "very scarce, for a new country which this may be considered to be." From Indians Work learned that the only pass in the mountains to the northeast was by the South Fork of Boise River, which still lay to the westward. Moving to the latter stream above its junction with the Big Smoky, Worked climbed a nearby peak from which he could see to the northward "a continuation of rugged mountains covered with snow" -- the Sawtooth Range.[512]

On May 24, 1832, four men were sent out to scout a way across the range and to see "what sort of a country is ahead of them." They returned the next day to report that a passable route had been found, although there was still considerable snow. "On the opposite side," they said, "there is a pretty extensive valley" watered by a "pretty large stream." They had reached Sawtooth Valley, and what was more they had each caught two beaver there.[513]

On Sunday, May 27, the party was on the move a little after daylight. Traveling through snow the greater part of the day, they probably ascended Vienna Creek and crossed the summit into Smiley

Creek. An Indian trail is known to have led that way.[514]

When the upper Sawtooth Valley was reached, Work was quick to observe that the small willows along the river were "of too small a size to promise beaver." Before the long day was over this judgment was confirmed. Traps were set, but few beaver were taken. Signs were found confirming reports that Americans and Flatheads had hunted there during the summer. "Thus we find the country which we expected to find new and rich is neither, and does not answer the account given of it by the Indians," the leader bitterly commented in his journal.[515]

The brigade proceeded down Sawtooth Valley to the vicinity of the present Upper Stanley. Trials on neighboring streams proved that either there were no beaver or that the Americans had made a clean sweep of the valuable animals. Concluding that the Salmon River region had been exhausted as far as beaver were concerned, Work decided to head for home.

On June 4 the entire company packed up and moved westward, probably past Cape Horn and across the very low divide to the Bear Valley drainage.[516] From there they beat a way westward across the Payette and Weiser drainages, suffering much from a scarcity of game and from having to cut trails through dense woods. By June 19 the men had consumed all their provisions, and horses began to be killed for food. Only as the Snake River was neared were they able to trade a few provisions from the natives.

The brigade reached the Snake River "about midway between Payette's and Waser Rivers," on June 27. Work "immediately" put

his men to building a "skin canoe," and the next three days were occupied in crossing the people, baggage, and horses to the west side of the stream. A Company mule and some property were lost in the process.

On June 30 Work detached eight men under C. Plante to hunt on the Malheur River, the upper Silvies River, and on the headwaters of Crooked River. He gave them twenty-four days to reach Walla Walla. The main company went down the Snake a few miles to Burnt River, which was ascended to its upper waters. The party then crossed to the tributaries of John Day River. Here a trapper named Soteaux became lost and despite intensive search by members of the brigade was not found. Later in the year Work heard that the missing man had been murdered by the Snakes.[517]

From the upper waters of the John Day, Work crossed the mountains northward and reached Fort Nez Percés on July 19, 1832. The various detached parties straggled in during the next day or two. On his arrival, Work received confirmation of Indian reports that two of the four men he had sent on the foolhardy venture down the Salmon River had been drowned.

A few days were spent at Walla Walla settling accounts with the men, storing their baggage, and gumming boats for the voyage down the Columbia to the depot. On the morning of July 25 Work embarked with thirty men and by dint of hard driving reached Fort Vancouver on the afternoon of July 27, 1832.[518]

The results of Work's 1831-1832 expedition verged on the disastrous. McLoughlin described the fur returns as "very poor."[519]

Six Europeans had been lost -- four killed by Indians, two drowned -- and one had been "disabled for Life." One Indian with the party also died of wounds inflicted by the Blackfeet. Out of 329 horses brought from Walla Walla or acquired on the way, 114 were lost, killed for food, died of fatigue or cold, or were otherwise missing.[520]

But McLoughlin defended Work's leadership of the expedition. "I am satisfied," he told the Committee, "he did the utmost that could possibly be done." Work himself, McLoughlin added, had suggested going to the Clark Fork region, "the only place where there are Beaver in any quantity on this side of the Mountains." Since the Snake drainage was cleared of beaver, it was considered desirable to give that region a rest. For that reason, the "Big Doctor" implied and in spite of the fact that the party was believed too weak to operate in Blackfoot territory, "I allowed hime to go; & when it is considered he was well aware of the danger . . . the firmness & zeal with which he prosecuted the attempt, entitle him to my approbation."[520] The Columbia manager appears to have avoided mentioning that Work had hunted east of the Continental Divide.[522]

As for Work, he seems to have been content to have returned alive. "I am happy in being able to inform you that I enjoy good health," he told a friend, "and am yet blessed with the possession of my scalp which is rather more than I had reason to expect."[523]

Although Work's two expeditions had demonstrated quite conclusively that the Snake Country was almost ruined as a trapping ground, McLoughlin was not prepared to abandon it or the Snake expeditions entirely; neither was he ready to replace Work as their

leader. As early as March 14, 1832, he told Chief Trader Francis Heron at Fort Colvile to comply with Work's "usual Requisition" as fully as possible and to forward the supplies to Walla Walla.[524] And on July 1 he requested Clerk Pierre Pambrun at Fort Nez Percés to trade as many horses as he could and to assist Work to the fullest extent of his ability.[525] And on July 2, in a letter sent ahead to meet Work at Walla Walla, he said: "If you have found no place to Employ your men this ensuing Winter -- I think we will be obliged to send them to the Bonaventura [Sacramento] Valley -- at the same time it is unnecessary to say any thing to the men . . . . though we can come to no decision on the subject till I see you."[526]

After Work and McLoughlin discussed the future route at Fort Vancouver, it was decided to take another try at the Snake Country, but only that part of it bordering the Humboldt River. If not rich hauls of beaver were made there, Work was to move on to the Sacramento River in California.[527] Work himself seems to have had in mind "proceeding round" from the Humboldt "to the S. branch" [the San Joaquin River] and descending it "to the head of the Bay of st. Francisco."[528]

McLoughlin was a bit less definite in the written instructions he handed to Work at Fort Vancouver on August 17, 1832. "You will proceed with the party under your charge, either to the Snake Country or to the Bonaventura Valley as from the information you will acquire on the Route you may deem most advisable . . . . If you meet Michel Laframboise [in charge of the Company's Southern Brigade] you will assume the Direction of the two parties."[529]

On that same day Work left the depot to join his men who were enjoying their regale a few miles upriver. "I am going to start with my regmuffin freemen to the southward towards the Spanish settlements with what success I cannot say," he wrote to a friend.[530] Soon the gossip among the Columbia officers was that this expedition would mark the "last year of the [Snake] party."[531]

The next morning the brigade of twenty-six men got under way in earnest, proceeding up the Columbia in three boats. Fort Nez Percés was reached on August 24 and 25. The following few days were spent distributing the provisions, leather lodges, horse agrès [horse "furniture"], and the horses. But when this task was completed the expedition experienced a further delay. A number of the people had been taken ill with malaria at Fort Vancouver, but instead of recovering at Walla Walla as they had a year earlier they seemed to become worse, and an infectious disease which Work called a "severe cold" spread through the party. Several more days were spent waiting for the sick to recover, but the season was becoming late and a start finally had to be made on September 6 even though a number of the people were still nearly incapacitated.

François Payette, a veteran of the Columbia fur trade and a regular Company employee, had been designated as second in command of the expedition by McLoughlin and was to take charge if anything untoward should happen to Work. But Payette was so ill that he had to be left behind at Walla Walla. When word of this misfortune reached the "Big Doctor," he fell into despair. There was now no one in the brigade capable of taking charge should Work be incapacitated,